

Inefficient—Blundering—Crooked:—That's the Tariff as it Stands See Page 147

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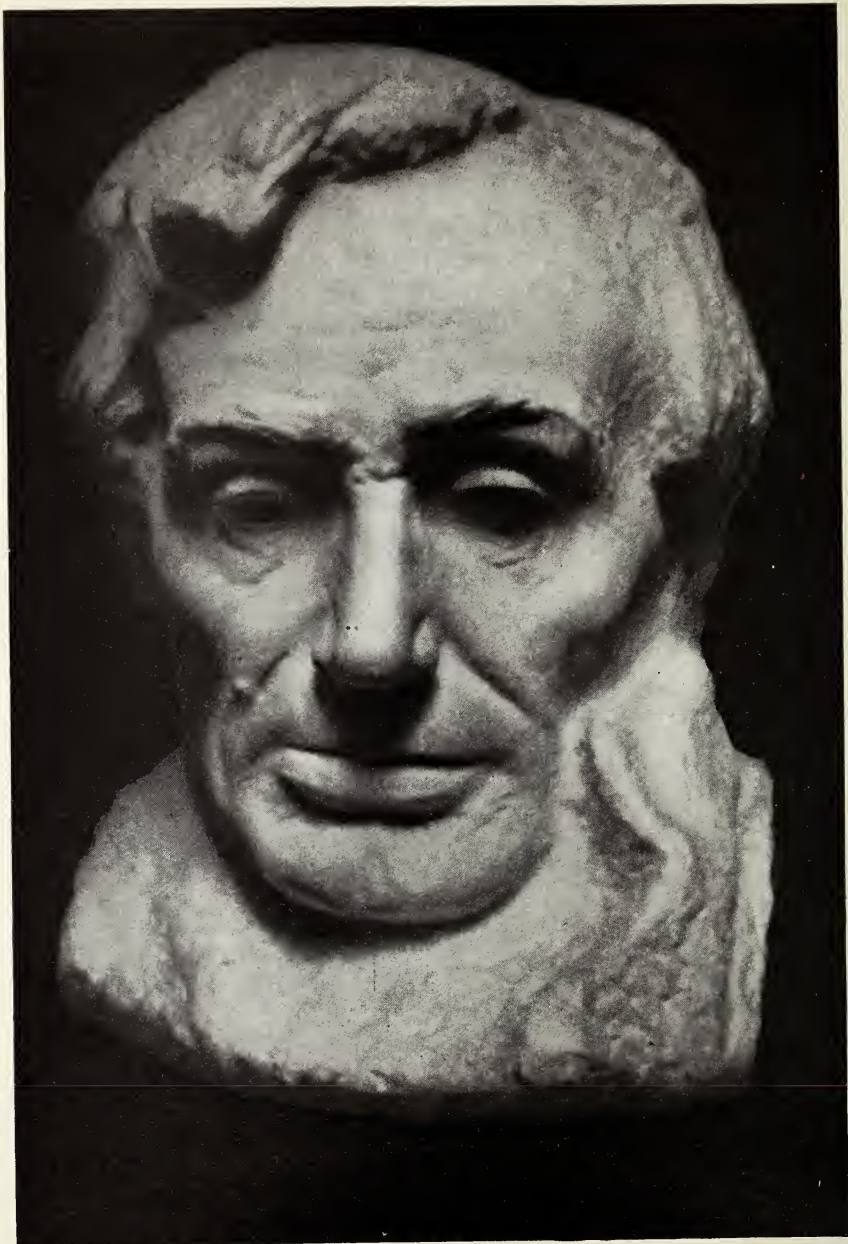
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Photograph by Alvin Langdon Coburn

A PORTRAIT BUST OF LINCOLN, MODELED AFTER EXHAUSTIVE, CONSCIENTIOUS STUDIES AND MEASUREMENTS, BY GUTZON BORGLUM.

THE BEAUTY OF LINCOLN

By GUTZON BORGLUM

CARLYLE once said to Holman Hunt: "I'm only a poor man, but I would give one third of what I possess for a veritable, contemporaneous representation of Jesus Christ. Had those carvers of marble chiseled a faithful statue of the Son of Man, as he called himself, and shown us what manner of man he was like, what his height, what his build, and what the features of his sorrow-marked face were, I for one would have thanked the sculptor with all the gratitude of my heart for that portrait, as one of the most precious heirlooms of the ages."

Remarkable as it may seem, were it not for photography and one life mask, this, with equal truth, might be said of a man who, as the ages run, has hardly gone from among us.

Lincoln, one of the greatest of observers, was himself the least truly observed. God had built him in the back-yard of the nation, and there, wrapped in homely guise, had preserved and matured his pure humanity. He was heard, but seems rarely, if ever, to have been truly seen. The reports we have of him do not satisfy, do not justify themselves, are inconsistent. The Eastern, Old-World eye could not read beyond the queer hat, bad tailoring, and boots you could not now give away—and he was so long he fairly had to stoop to look the little world in the face.

Never have bad tailoring and homely, deferential manner so completely hidden seer, jester, master of men, as did these simple accouterments this first great gift of the West. The world ever reads simple, deferential manner—true evidence of innate refinement—as weakness, timidity, and indecision, just as it reads strength in noise, and power in abuse. It is said of sound that volume will start a tear more quickly than quality of tone. But it is surprising that professional observers, artists and writers alike, have drawn and redrawn an untrue picture of this man. Out of the hundreds of Lincoln's pictures few are reliable, even as records of fact; and the hundreds of copyrighted lives of him, in their personal

description, are largely reiterated popular opinion and hearsay.

A great portrait—and I do not mean the modern masterpieces of technique, that factor which has practically wrecked modern portraiture through vanity on the part of the public, and blatant insincerity in painter, sculptor, and author—a great portrait is always full of compelling presence, more even than is at all times seen in the original; for a great portrait depicts great moments, and carries the life record of the whole man. It is, therefore, not sufficient to draw a mask. If this were enough, the lifeless, bloodless state-paper to which Washington has been reduced would be a great portrait. The Father of his Country, as a human possibility, has been edited out of existence. Even the faithful but placid mask by Houdon leaves us utterly uninterested. There is nothing left that convention could eliminate—and this is about all we have of the man Washington.

The mask is not enough for Lincoln. Prudish Colonial vanity and icicled Puritanism have melted away, and I would the state-paper to which the Father of his Country has been reduced, and the jackknife sketch our righteous forebears whittled of the savior of this land, had passed with them. Acres of misdrawn caricatures, however, have not sufficed to hide *his* acts; *his* writings, some photographs, or an occasional note sketched, thank God, without deliberate intent—through these Lincoln lives, lives as a comfort and a reality, an example, a living inspiration to every mother and every son in America.

No mask will satisfy *us*; *we* want to see what we care for; *we* want to feel the private conscience that became public conduct. With his coming, the West has steadily rolled back the East, and of his ways the world has many. The silk hat, the tall figure, the swing, the language and manner have become American, and now we understand and love this man because he was wholly one of us and made true democracy a living fact.

Official Washington was shocked by his

address. Men who could have given us master pictures of a master man remained unconvinced until he had passed. The great portrait was never drawn, and now it is too late; we must wade through mountains of material, and by some strange divination find in fragments the real man, and patiently, lovingly, yet justly, piece them together.

Nor is it strange that this first product of the West should confound Old-World-trained eyes. They were blind to the real man; they ever read him by official and Continental standards. His free, easy stride, not Indian but Western—developed in the open road, where men, with bent head, study the unbroken trail—was misnamed. His deference and native, Middle-West directness led the superficial observer into making those caricatures by which the public knows him best.

It was speculation of this kind that gradually led me to a careful analysis of Lincoln the man. I felt that the *accepted* portraits of him did not justify his record. His life, his labors, his writings made me feel some gross injustice had been done him in the blind, careless use of such phrases as *ungainly, uncouth, vulgar, rude*, which were commonly applied to him by his contemporaries. These popular descriptions did not fit the master of polished Douglas, nor the man whose "intellectual arrogance" academic Sumner resented.

I did not believe there ever was a grotesque Lincoln. I did not believe the man who could whip his way to the head of a band of ruffians, reason his way to the head of a town meeting, inspire and fire a nation, win and hold the hearts of millions, was gawky—or even awkward.

No, Lincoln was not an awkward man. He was long of limb, and, as is the method of long-limbed men, he moved his arms from his shoulders, his legs from his hips; and this gives rise in the mind of the observer to a sense of awkwardness, because the whole body always takes up part of the labor, producing an appearance of effort not perceived in people of medium height. It is not generally known that this is the true way to ease and grace, and that so all natural human beings move—and so moved the Greeks.

I believed the healthy, powerful youth and frontiersman, the lover, lawyer of spotless record, legislator, victor over the artful Douglas, the man thrice candidate for President, had been falsely drawn. I believed, if properly seen and truly read, the compelling

and enduring greatness of the man would be found written in his actions, in his figure, in his deportment, in his face, and that some of this compelling greatness might be put into marble.

In order to do this, I read all, or nearly all, he had written, his own description of himself, the few immediate records of his coming and going. I then took the life mask, learned it by heart, measured it in every possible way—for it is infallible—then returned to the habits of mind which his writings showed; and I came to the conclusion that five or six of the photographs indicated the real man.

Fortunately, Lincoln was wholly without personal vanity and could be as remote, as naïve, as alone in the presence of the camera, as though he were a sentinel on the field of Gettysburg; and we have three or four photographs which are great human documents, for they give the mood of the man, and show the features arrested in mental action.

I found, however, that I must get behind his acts, must nestle into his viewpoint, following him not as a reporter but as one with himself. Lincoln's interest to the true reporter, the true artist, lies in his continual, *unconscious* reiteration of great human traits. He was primarily natural—he would not hold discourse with any one until he had literally stripped him of all pretense, official or social. He was wholly without vanity and brooked none of it. Had Apollo called upon him, there is no doubt he would have compelled him to listen to a story of quaint human foibles—perchance designedly—before settling the affairs of some new world. In other words, he possessed, in a most remarkable way, traits that will make him the subject of the most inspired art, long after Napoleon is but a name.

There is another point that cannot be too much insisted upon if one will draw this great plainsman truly. You must get into *his own* story—follow him closely through his first years—and, forgetting nothing, you will find nothing to forgive. Slight not his love for Ann Rutledge, nor his conduct following her death, which sounds the highest note of a heart's cry. Then if you wish to conjure up the man, move quickly to the most serious cabinet meeting of the century, opened with a reading from Artemus Ward, and watch him continue it, fulfilling his compact with himself, with God, freeing four millions of slaves. This scene admits of the greatest possible distortion; it might have been grotesque; it was godlike. Is there any other

character in history who could repeat it? This extraordinary act sent to their beds his cabinet with impressions never to be forgotten.

Then watch him as he listens to the pleadings of a widow for her son. You will see his lower lip make an attempt at firmness, curl tightly under the strong upper line, then release the tension, tremble a little awkwardly; you see his mouth open a trifle, close, his head move slightly, his shoulders seem to move forward; you feel his inclination to lift all the length of his arms, just as a bird might as it begins to fly; there has been hardly any movement—but enough. He has answered with his whole being, and all that's human understands. A sympathizing statesman, protesting that Lincoln ought not to be bothered with such things, is waved aside with the answer, "These are the things that make it possible for me to go on."

Whether Lincoln sat or stood, his was the ease of movement of a figure controlled by direct and natural development, without a hint of consciousness. There are but two possible explanations of this—either he was a consummate artist and appreciated the power of absolute directness, or else he was by nature wholly unconscious. His ease was that of a man of power.

He sat in chairs a little too low for him. Of course, chairs were not made for him—nothing in this democratic country of ours is made for anybody in particular; everything is made for everybody. And so Lincoln seemed when he sat down to sink farther than was quite easy or graceful, and that left his knees pushing unnaturally high. Again, when rising, he would grab both knees as if to help himself; he would lean forward to find the center of his equilibrium—a movement we all go through; but in dear old Abe, because he was a little out of scale with his smaller companions, they called it awkward.

His walk was free, and he moved with a long, but rather slow, swinging stride; he looked down as he walked, like a man picking his way carefully over a newly harrowed field, lifting his feet quite clear of the soft ground. It was this movement that gave the long fold in the thigh part of his trousers, straining the garment—an effect often commented upon.

His arms hung free, and he carried his hand open. Any one wearing an eight and a half glove could take his hand easily in his. His hands were not disproportionately large; but the cut of his sleeve was generous, as of

his period, and in the swinging use of his arms so much of his wrists came through that they seemed large. In his early life hard labor had developed the palms of his hands, and the thick muscle part of his thumb was full and strong; but this shrank later to the thumb of the literary man, and, strangely, considering his early life, he carried it closely into his hand, as becomes the habit, or is the nature, of literary men.

He was erect. He did not stoop at the shoulders, as nearly everybody states. There are no wrinkles in his coat, forward, between the lapel and the shoulder, nor is there a corresponding strain in the back, to show the garment's yield to the stooping tenant. On the contrary, there is evidence of an erectness, definite and purposeful.

And here I want to register a statement that Abraham Lincoln was a man of action. It takes most human beings from three to five generations to get within speaking distance of the circle this man raised himself to and commanded, in a short lifetime, without the shoulders of predatory interests to creep upon; and many of his photographs show to me a spirit hunting and hunted as by some soul-stirring motive. His neck does not *rest* on his shoulders. It rises from them with an erectness, an alertness, as of one alarmed, that is unique.

In 1861, he tried to raise a beard—through the suggestion of a little girl that by doing so he might look "less ugly." For a year and a half he was quite undetermined how to cut that beard. He trimmed it short, then shaved it low, then cropped it quite close. Not until 1863 does he seem to have become quite used to it. About 1862 he began definitely to change the parting of his hair from the right side to the left. And though he did this chiefly with his fingers, he seems to have acted with a definite purpose, for it caused a radical change in his appearance, and he persisted in it.

His face was large in its simple masses. Nature seems to have intended him to be ten or twelve feet in height, and as he failed to grow to that, the free skin settled back to fit the natural man. His head was normal in size; his forehead high, regular, and classical in shape. He was wide through the temples; his brow projected like a cliff. The hollow of the eye was large and deep, and the eye seemed to lie in a kind of ravine; it would hardly have been perceptible if you had passed your hand over the ball. His cheek

bones were not high; they seemed high because of the careworn flesh that shrank sharply beneath. Below this, again, the face lost the splendid regularity of the upper part. The nose yielded to the constant activity of the right side of his face, and was drawn in that direction. The line of the mouth ran up toward the right side. This becomes very perceptible if one looks at any of his good, full-face portraits.

His eyebrows were very strong, and hung out over his face like the huge cornice of a mountain bungalow. They were bushy and moved freely, and developed a set of wrinkles similar to those seen in the face of Homer. There was a large wrinkle that descended from the lower and outer part of the eye almost straight into the hollow of the cheek line, and became very strong when he laughed; in severity, this would straighten out like a guy rope.

His mouth was not coarse nor heavy. His upper lip was as regular as can be—bearing a little to the right; but his lower lip was drawn toward the right side at least half an inch—and some irregularity of his teeth and the way his jaws came together forced the lower lip out, giving the exaggerated line we see.

I discovered by carefully tracing individual expressions, tendencies to expression, wrinkles, and other developments of his face, the habits of the separate features. Little can be determined about a man by the structure of his nose, nor can his character be fixed because he has a small eye or a full one, high cheek bones or practically none, a full mouth or a small one. But the use he makes of those features, and the record that use makes daily upon the features and the whole face, can be read as easily as the headlines of a New York paper. And so I found that the storm center of Lincoln's face was about his right eye. He would peer out at you for an instant with this right eye half closed; then would follow that uplift of his head and the receptive expression that was so generally misread as bewilderment, hesitancy, and indecision.

The mirth center was also in the right eye. The eye always gives the first evidence of humor in a merry soul; and Lincoln, I believe, had naturally a merry soul. But sadness changed this, and I found evidence that he smiled very, very often with his mouth alone when his nature took no part in it. It

was the saddest feature that he had, and yet about the right corner there always lingered a little memory of a smile.

The left eye was open, noncommittal, dreamy. The brow seemed ever to question, and all this side of the face seemed primitive, unfinished. The expression was sad, undetermined, and I believe he knew this and that it explains why he managed so often to get the photographer to the right side of him. This right side was as cautious as Cassius, and in profile remarkably like that of Keats. The profile from the left was pure Middle-West plainsman. All expressions of pleasure, when they reached this side of his face, seemed to lose their merriment, and the habitual lowering of the line of the mouth on this side accentuated the sadness. Expressions on his face seemed to begin about the left upper brow, travel across to the right eye, down the right side, and stop at the upper lip, or lose themselves over the rest of his face.

Briefly—the right side of this wonderful face is the key to his life. Here you will find the record of his development, the centuries-old marks of his maturity. All the man grew to seemed engraved on this side. It guards his plan—watches the world, and shows no more of his light than his wisdom deems wise. The left side is immature, plain—and physically not impressive. It is long, drawn, and indecisive; and this brow is anxious, ever slightly elevated and concerned.

You will find written on his face literally all the complexity of his great nature—a nature seeing at once the humor and the pathos of each situation as it presents itself to him. You see half smile, half sadness; half anger, half forgiveness; half determination, half pause; a mixture of expression that drew accurately the middle course he would follow—read wrongly by both sides. We see a dual nature struggling with a dual problem, delivering a single result.

He was more deeply rooted in the home principles that are keeping us together than any man who was ever asked to make his heartbeat national—the first great human return from the West—too great to become president, except by the extraordinary combination of circumstances then existing.

It is yet to be shown in bronze or marble, as Carlyle said of Christ, what manner of man he was—his majesty, his simplicity, his humanity.